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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ADDIS ABABA 000139

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ET](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF THE CUD  
MOVEMENT

REF: A. A. 05 ADDIS ABABA 3425  
[1](#)B. B. 05 ADDIS ABABA 3954  
[1](#)C. C. 06 ADDIS ABABA 0714  
[1](#)D. D. 06 ADDIS ABABA 1160  
[1](#)E. E. 06 ADDIS ABABA 3130

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Kevin Sullivan for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Internal disputes over tactics and personal rivalries have continued over the last several months to weaken and divide the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) -- the strongest opposition movement in Ethiopia's landmark 2005 elections. While those who led the CUD to an impressive showing in those elections remain jailed for their role in the November 2005 street protests, leaders of the re-organized "CUDP" have been feuding over control of the party. Some in the CUDP are seeking to reestablish links with imprisoned CUD leaders, who had previously disowned the reorganized CUDP, as well as with sources of funding in the Diaspora. Another faction, led by Ayele Chamiso, wants to purge the party of "hard-liners" whom he claims maintain links to former CUD chairman Hailu Shawel. The National Electoral Board (NEB) refused to recognize a general assembly called in late October by CUDP vice-chairman Ayele, and wrote to Ayele and Chairman Temesgen Zewde to urge rapprochement. The Temesgen and Ayele factions remain at loggerheads, however, and the dispute has moved to the judiciary. In the meantime, a close associate of the jailed CUD leaders claims the group's views on the current political process and on CUDP leaders in Parliament have become more conciliatory. If this account is true, prospects are better than many had thought for reintegrating the CUD's former leadership and simultaneously restoring public confidence in Ethiopia's democratization process. An ideal scenario would see Hailu Shawel, Berhanu Nega and other leaders released from prison in the coming months in return for pledges to participate responsibly in democratic politics. The continuing popularity of the jailed leaders would make them favorites to reassume leadership of the CUD movement. End Summary

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RIFT DEVELOPS IN CUD SUCCESSOR PARTY  
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[1](#)2. (C) The CUDP was formed in March 2006 as the purported successor organization to the outlawed CUD, with significant encouragement from post (refs C, D). Legal registration of the CUDP was achieved largely through the efforts of Addis City Council Member-elect Ayele Chamiso, who hoped the formation of the party would facilitate the transfer of power

in Addis Ababa to him and his fellow city council electees. The effort to take over the city government was ultimately unsuccessful, but most CUD Parliamentarians eventually became members of the new party and operated under its banner in the Chamber (ref D). In April 2006, founding members of the CUDP elected parliamentary whip Temesgen Zewde as Chairman and Ayele as Vice-Chairman of the organization; 11 city council members-elect and 11 parliamentarians formed a 22-member interim executive committee to run the party until a formal general assembly could be held. Efforts by CUDP Chairman Temesgen to win the support of CUD leaders in jail were reportedly rebuffed, but the Temesgen and other CUDP leaders nonetheless continued to refer to Hailu Shawel, Berhanu Nega and other detainees as "our leaders" in their Parliamentary speeches. Temesgen and his associates proceeded with their efforts in the hopes that at some point CUD detainees, if released, would drop their objections and participate in the new party.

13. (C) Tensions existed from the beginning between city council members-elect and parliamentarians, with the latter considering themselves (with some justification) a more educated and qualified group. Parliamentarians also had the benefit of their official salaries, while the would-be city councilors derived no economic support from their political activity. At the same time, Ayele Chamiso in particular insists that he did most of the legwork in registering the CUDP while receiving physical threats from hard-line supporters of the former CUD. He felt that his efforts merited the party's top job, but he was prevailed upon to accept Temesgen as Chair, largely due to the latter's status as the CUDP's chief whip in Parliament.

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14. (C) Beyond personal rivalries, there has also been an ongoing struggle over whether the CUDP is a brand new party or simply a reconstitution of the old CUD. Hard-liners from the old party objected to the formation of any alternative leadership to jailed leaders, as well as to efforts to continue the democratic political process while their colleagues remained in prison. While nearly all CUDP parliamentarians had defied the decision of the old CUD central committee in assuming their seats, many nonetheless maintained closer personal ties and sympathy with incarcerated CUD leaders than did city councilors, some of whom had never even met the old party leaders in person. In fact, parliamentarians, led by former CUD central committee member Mulualem Tarkegne, initiated efforts in late 2006 to reach out to the dozens of other former CUD Central Committee members who were not imprisoned to seek their support for the new CUDP. CUDP Secretary General Muhammed Ali, another member of the old Central Committee, may also have been in contact with Diaspora financial supporters of the old in recent months. Both of these efforts were clearly aimed at recovering both the political and financial support that helped the CUD score stunning gains at the polls in May 2005.

14. (C) Ayele, for his part, has on several occasions denounced efforts to reach out to anyone connected with the old CUD central committee. He has charged that some parliamentarians are taking directions from Hailu Shawel as well as Diaspora figures who Ayele claims are not committed to peaceful political change. In mid-October, Ayele notified post that he intended to report the activities of some CUDP parliamentarians, including MP Mohammed Ali, to the police. It is unclear whether Ayele received detailed information on the activities of other CUDP members from party colleagues, or from GOE intelligence services. There are some indications, including his detailed knowledge of his political opponents' contacts, that suggest Ayele may have been in regular contact with GOE operatives. Senior GOE officials, including PM Meles, have publicly agreed with Ayele's position that the CUDP is a new party that should not seek either legal or political continuity with the outlawed CUD. Reaching out to former CUD leaders, particularly those

in the Diaspora, has become even more problematic given the Diaspora CUD's participation in the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD), a multi-ethnic umbrella group that has not renounced violence as a political tool.

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SHOWDOWN OVER THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
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¶15. (C) Amid these tensions, a special committee of the CUDP was designated to plan a general assembly meeting to, among other things, satisfy legal requirements for obtaining a permanent party registration. Although initial plans called for a meeting in mid-October, party chairman Temesgen and other leaders sought to delay the meeting, claiming that adequate funding and an appropriate site had not been arranged. It also appeared, however, that the parliamentarians and Ayele were at loggerheads over the issue of who could attend the assembly and therefore vote on a permanent leadership structure. Ayele was bent on winning the top job himself and on expelling "hard-liners" and their sympathizers from the organization, while Temesgen, Mohammed Ali and others sought to outmaneuver Ayele by bringing new members into the party, including members of the old CUD central committee. After a week of acrimonious debate, and unsuccessful conciliation efforts by post officers, Ayele and Temesgen each expelled each other (and several associates of each faction) from the CUDP.

¶16. (C) Ayele called a general assembly meeting at the NEB offices on October 22. He invited many parliamentarians, but none turned up. Over 150 other CUD members did, however, and the meeting (not surprisingly) chose Ayele as Chair and Temesgen (en absentia) as Vice-Chair of the party. Temesgen and his allies rejected the meeting, however, and petitioned the NEB not to recognize the meeting as legitimate, since it had been called without the Chair's consent and in violation of several other procedures. On October 30, the NEB issued a letter to both Temesgen and Ayele that 1) refused to recognize Ayele's general assembly; 2) reiterated the legal requirements for full party registration; and 3) instructed Temesgen to call a new general assembly within a month and to include Ayele and other members of the interim coordinating

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committee. The NEB also found that none of the 22-member interim leadership had authority to expel members from the party. Ayele subsequently filed suit against the NEB for refusing to recognize his General Assembly; the matter remains before the court, with a decision expected in early ¶2007. In the meantime, the GOE has responded to the CUDP's internal battle by inviting both Temesgen and Ayele's factions to participate in the inter-party dialogue with the EPRDF on key political reforms.

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HAS THE OLD CUD LEADERSHIP EVOLVED?  
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¶17. (C) Pol/Econ Counselor's Jan. 10 discussion with Maj. Admassu Melaku, a long-time associate of Hailu Shawel and member of the former central committee of the CUD, suggested that the attitudes of jailed CUD leaders may have evolved significantly during recent months in ways that would facilitate national reconciliation. Like roughly half of his CUD Central Committee colleagues, Admassu was not arrested following the November 2005 round-ups, but chose to keep a low profile. Elected an MP in 2005, he declined to take his seat in deference to the CUD's decision to boycott and did not involve himself in any of the efforts to establish the CUDP. He claims to be in contact with his constituents in Addis, however, as well as CUD supporters in the Amhara region. Admassu said he visits the detained CUD leaders almost every week and at least one alleged communique from detained CUD leaders several months ago identified Admassu as their representative.

18. (C) Maj. Admassu claims that the detainees now understand that the GOE is "strong and can resist popular efforts to topple it." All detainees are now committed to participating in the peaceful democratic process. While jailed leaders once viewed CUDP MPs who took their seats in Parliament as traitors, these views have softened considerably now. According to Admassu, the leaders have sent private messages to those in Parliament asking them to cease their bickering and represent the CUD in a unified way. Admassu acknowledged contacts with Temesgen Zewde, s faction of the CUDP in advance of the party's recent general assembly, but said former Central Committee members had not taken part in the meeting mainly because they were not offered leadership positions (Comment: CUDP parliamentary leaders likely feared GOE retribution for publicly embracing former CUD leaders.) Maj. Admassu told post of his plans to travel to the Washington to lobby the U.S.-based Ethiopian Diaspora on the need for engagement, rather than shrill confrontation, with the GOE. He claimed to have the full support of the detained leaders for this effort. Many Diaspora leaders were still focused on overthrowing the GOE, he said, and maintained contacts with underground operatives who sought to destabilize the country. This had to change, Admassu said, and the CUD in Ethiopia hoped to gain the support of the Diaspora for a more patient, moderate line of action.

19. (C) Admassu further claims that CUD central committee members have held three secret meetings with senior EPRDF official Bereket Simon to discuss how to achieve the release of detainees as well as a "national consensus" on democratization. Among the issues under discussion is how a "moderate" CUD could reestablish itself and operate within the political system. (Comment: this is presumably referring to the reintegration of leaders from the former CUD into political life, not to the CUDP already in Parliament.) Talks are still exploratory at this point, but Admassu believes that the GOE now wants the former CUD leadership back in politics. Admassu was also aware and supported of ongoing (and highly sensitive) efforts by a group of Ethiopian elders to broker a pardon of CUD detainees with the GOE (ref E).

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COMMENT: REASSEMBLING THE CUD -- AND ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRACY  
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110. (C) Battles between Temesgen and Ayele can be seen as continuations of struggles for power that existed within CUD since the movement's inception. The strength and innovation of the CUD was its unification of several smaller political forces with an urban/Amhara base into a cohesive force to oppose the fifteen-year dominance of the EPRDF. At the same

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time, the movement's unity was in some ways only skin deep. While the CUD was able to maintain discipline amongst its factions for much of 2005, both former CUD leader Lidetu Ayelew and Berhanu Nega (in his book) have described a brutal leadership struggle under the surface. In addition to Lidetu (UEDP-Medhin) and Berhanu (Rainbow), former CUD Chairman Hailu Shawel (from the All Ethiopian Unity Party) was also pushing for primacy. These personal rivalries almost certainly affected the party's seminal debates over whether to pursue gradual change through participation in (imperfect) democratic institutions, or pursue the ouster of the EPRDF regime through a wave of popular protests. Hailu's preference for confrontation ultimately prevailed in late 2005, but subsequent developments have shown that many in the CUD movement are willing to pursue the gradual path to change.

111. (C) The CUD and its future role in Ethiopian democracy remain difficult to predict, but if Maj. Admassu's account of the political evolution of jailed leaders is true, prospects are better than many had thought for reintegrating the CUD's

former leadership and simultaneously restoring public confidence in Ethiopia's democratization process. An ideal scenario would see Hailu Shawel, Berhanu Nega and other leaders released from prison in the coming months in return for pledges to participate responsibly in democratic politics. If the jailed CUD leadership were able to reconcile with CUDP leaders already in Parliament, this would greatly facilitate the former group's re-entry into politics.

New arrangements for party leadership would have to be sorted out, but the continuing popularity of the jailed leaders with average Ethiopians would put them in a commanding position. The release of former CUD leaders would render the dispute between Ayele and Temesgen a moot point -- and likely leave Ayele poorly positioned for future participation in the CUDP.

¶12. (C) The EPRDF, for its part, may have realized that it needs the former CUD leadership's participation in the political process to give that process legitimacy in the eyes of both the Ethiopian public and international donors. Ongoing squabbles between CUDP factions, as well as lukewarm public support for the party, have likely demonstrated that the current CUDP cannot fully represent the constituency that voted in large numbers for the CUD in 2005. Nonetheless, the CUDP's participation in Parliament has enabled democratic institutions -- however shaky -- to move forward; it has also likely encouraged the apparent evolution in approach among jailed CUD leaders. (Both these goals motivated post's support for re-registering the CUDP in 2006.) The return of detained CUD leaders to Ethiopian political life could, if accompanied by electoral reforms currently under discussion, dramatically improve prospects for successful local elections in the latter part of 2007. Re-incorporation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) into democratic politics -- which would have to come via separate negotiations with the GOE -- would remove another important source of societal tension and further enhance prospects for genuine democratization.

YAMAMOTO